

ECONOMIC BALANCE: EXCHANGE

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more severe and the advantageous positions secured by the enterprising first-comers are threatened by later recruits of the 'seeking-out-the-customer' movement. 443
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Wayside shops also line the road leading from the north gate to the two large European stores—'canteens' in the popular idiom. Here the inventiveness of Bida traders has seized upon a new device to attract and 'seek out' the customer. Many peasants from backward villages who come to Bida to buy certain essential European articles, such as salt or sugar, either want to buy them in very small quantities—smaller quantities than they could obtain at the store—or are too shy and frightened to enter the stores themselves. These are the customers of the little stands outside the 'canteens': for here the peasants can buy the same articles in the smallest quantities and without having to undergo the ordeal of a purchase in the unfamiliar, forbidding, store.¹

MODERN BUSINESS METHODS

The last example brings us to another essential difference between the marketing system in Bida and in the village. The large volume of native trade in European goods and the close business connexion between native traders in Bida and the stores of the trading-companies have introduced certain completely new factors into Nupe marketing. They are visible in local trade on the smallest scale as well as in the large-scale enterprises of wealthy Bida merchants. Trade in certain European goods allows a more rapid turnover and more certain profits than any branch of native economy. The native trader or middleman can, as we have just seen, turn to his profit the fact that he can make certain essential and highly valued goods accessible to the consumer by retailing them in such small quantities that their price (though relatively high) is low enough to be within the means of peasants and small craftsmen. It is, for example, a regular practice of Bida women traders to buy tins of 50 cigarettes at the 'canteen', and to sell them singly (or even cut in half); to buy boxes of matches, and sell them in little bundles of five; packets of sugar, and sell the sugar a piece or two at the time; or to buy 4-gallon tins of paraffin, and sell it in pint bottles. It is hardly surprising that the profits, though absolutely small, are relatively high, up to 100 per cent.² 443

¹ This fear is really a compound of shyness and suspicion—one is suspicious just because one is shy and unfamiliar with the ways of these modern institutions. A most characteristic instance, concerning a Bida man who, one would think, would hardly need to be shy or afraid, is the following: a Bida Mallam with whom I was very friendly came to see me one day and asked me if I would do him a favour and order spare tyres from the 'canteen' for a lorry belonging to a friend of his. His friend, he explained, disliked ordering them himself, for he knew he would be cheated and given the wrong kind of tyres. What had happened was that his friend had some time previously ordered tyres without, however, knowing that it was necessary to quote the exact size. He had been given tyres of the size most frequently found on the lorries running in the country, but unfortunately they did not fit his lorry. 157

² One tin of 50 cigarettes costs 1s.; one cigarette is sold for 0.3d., allowing a profit of 3d. in 1s. One box of matches, containing approximately 50 matches, costs 1d.; five matches sold for 0.2d. give a profit of 0.8d. in the penny. One 435

87/ Nupe education. No aspect of culture affords closer access to the paramount cultural motives and values. For education not only teaches openly the specific aims and conceptions of life accepted by the society, but reveals them also indirectly, in the motives and conceptions which it utilizes to call forth the desired response.

18/ Is, then, the reverse equally true? is behaviour that does not conform to this conception of life met with public disapproval? One might indeed ask if Nupe culture did not reserve some legitimate place within its framework for individuals to whom its dominant trend was uncongenial, and who represent what some anthropologists have called 'deviants' from the type of personality which the society regards as so highly desirable.¹ I must admit that I have found no conspicuous instances of such 'deviant' types. But we can guess the public response towards such social or cultural 'failures' from certain occasional incidents: for an attitude that belies the upward trend, and this dynamic aspect of self-advancement, is indeed regarded as a 'failure'; such individuals would be dismissed by the people with a mental shrug—'*u de kokari á*', 'he makes no effort'. As the Nupe state undertakes to govern the moral life of the people and to co-ordinate rigidly their conceptions of right and wrong, so its education attempts a complete unification of types of personality.

18/ Yet successful suppression in normal life may only mean that the 'deviant' type is forced into abnormality and will reveal itself in psycho-pathological cases. I have admitted in the first chapter the scantiness of data concerning mental disorders among the Nupe. But so far as they exist they seem to bear out the view that mental disorders in Nupe are largely symptoms of the failure of individuals to adjust themselves to the demands of the social environment. I have mentioned that the large majority of psycho-pathological cases that came to my notice presented the clinical picture of paranoid schizophrenia, with marked delusions and persecution-mania. Now modern psychiatry has shown that schizophrenia is essentially the result of inadequacy to a social environment. Indeed, in the few cases which I could examine more closely features of the social environment conspicuously entered the clinical picture. One man was under the delusion that he had been persecuted by a person of very high rank and robbed, through his intrigues, of his home and family; another maintained that intrigues against him at the court had cost him his land; a third case was that of an old man who was under the delusion that his younger brother (whom he admitted to be the more clever and successful of the two) was out to kill him. In creating these very specific delusions the psycho-pathological individual escapes from the consciousness of his own inadequacy. Though distorted and purely negative, the fears and anxieties which make up the delusion are the same fears and anxieties that accompany the successful mental adjustment to the *ethos* of Nupe life—the anxiety to 'get on' in the world, not to be left behind in the race for rank and position or the fear to lose the support of the 'powers that be', on whose influence one's career and safety depend. The border-line between normality and abnormality is that between

¹ Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, and Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament*.

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woman'. Certain of these clues will be borne out by the biographical sketches which I shall later quote. But let me emphasize that they represent merely a 'theory', firmly held though it may be. When I visited a noted witch with one of my informants (who had strongly stressed the morose and stern aspect of witches) I found her to be a pleasant-spoken young woman, whom I could easily make laugh by some small joke. When, later, I pointed out this apparent anomaly, my informant retorted that the woman had merely put on an act to throw off my suspicions; towards her own people she would still be morose and unfriendly.

But even if these clues are mere theory, they help us to understand the ascription of witchcraft to particular persons. If I tried to sum up briefly the Nupe character as it appears to the observer, I should say that the average person is always friendly, pleasant-spoken and polite, very fond of jokes, chatty, and given to ready laughter. To some extent such behaviour is consciously cultivated. To be unfriendly or unpleasant in intercourse is definitely 'bad form'; polite etiquette has been developed to a fine art; and in the routine of social life joking and playing have their appointed place. Whether the rules of etiquette do not sometimes serve to repress fiercer and less placid leanings, we may for the moment disregard: the point is that politeness and pleasantness constitute the accepted ideals of behaviour, the sort of morale the Nupe believe in. And this morale is valid more fully for the women than for the men, since the women stand outside the two provinces of social life where placidity and friendliness are, on occasion, out of place, namely, esoteric ritual and political struggle.

It is, then, the absence of the accepted morale which makes the Nupe suspect witchcraft. The woman who behaves as the Nupe think witches do is one whose character belies the common precepts and ideals of conduct; she is ill-conditioned, eccentric, 'atypical'—what Margaret Mead would call a 'deviant personality'. In other words, the suspicion of witchcraft fastens upon 'abnormality'; not the physical abnormality, say, of cripples, hunchbacks, or strikingly ugly people, which is merely a matter of ill-luck, nor the mental abnormality of lunatics, which is the handiwork of spirits; but the abnormality of social and moral deviants.

Yet ill-conditioned and eccentric individuals, morose and quarrelsome characters, are as frequent among the men and as openly disapproved. The question therefore remains, why this argument should apply to women only. And unless we are prepared to consider this concentration upon female witchcraft to be sheer accident, we must assume that it is in some fashion symptomatic of the life of the society which created the belief. I